

## ***Kantianism: morality is rational***

### **Immanuel Kant**

- A German philosopher (1724-1804)
- One of the most influential Western philosopher
- Kant spend almost all his life at his birthplace Konigsberg
- He was a bachelor
- He was said to be so regular in his daily routine
- He had a passion for logic math and science

### Critique of pure reason

- Kant aimed to resolve disputes between empiricist (lead by hume) and Rationalist (lead by Leibniz)
- Empiricists asserted that the human mind is like a blank slate. All knowledge comes only through experience.
- Rationalist maintained that the reason and innate ideas come prior to experience.

For example:

Two salesmen were sent to an African country by a shoe manufacturing company to scout new markets where they could sell their shoes. The salesman spent a month there, then came back to report their findings to their manager.

What they reported,

- The first salesman said, "There is no market in that country. I did not see anyone wearing shoes there."
- The second salesman said, "There is a huge market in that country. I did not see anyone wearing shoes there."

Kant's view:

- Experience is purely subjective without first being processed by pure reason.
- Using reason without applying it to experience only leads to theoretical illusions.
- A true principle is one that synergizes reasons with experience

Origen of moral law's

- Kant rejects scriptures, consciousness, and inner perfection of soul or god's will or any other extremal source as the source of the moral law.
- He proved that all moral laws are derived from human reason.
- He believed that man has a self-legislating capacity.

Deontological theory of Kant

- Deontology derived from Greek roots Deion (duty) + logic (reason).
- It means that an action is moral, it can be considered to be a duty with the reason that is universally acceptable.
- We may lie for personal advantage sometimes, however, we don't want lying to be a universal law we should not lie.
- Thus morality is not a divine law but a law that can be determined using reason and logic.

#### Moral actions as a duty

- Consequences have nothing to do with the moral duty.
- A moral action may lead to good or bad consequences.
- The results of an action do not determine the moral value of an action.
- An action leading to undesirable consequences could be moral and an action leading to good consequences could be immoral.
- Demolition of illegal property can be moral though may have a negative consequence.
- Hanging a needy person with a minor crime may be immoral but it may lead to good consequences.
- One should obey the moral law as a duty without bothering about its consequences.

#### Categorical imperative

- The categorical imperative is an absolute command to be obeyed for its sake.
- Intentional action is rational, however, it is not always permissible.
- You may intentionally refuse to return a debt, which is a rational thought as it benefits you personally. However, you can't recommend 'don't return a debt' universally.
- Hence, 'doesn't return a debt' can't be said to be a morally permissible maxim as it would destroy trust between people, reduce commerce and economic progress.
- A rational moral agent should act in a way that the maxim of his action becomes a universal law.

#### Some moral laws derived from Kant's law

- You should not steal.
- You should not injure.
- You should not kill.
- You should be kind to others.

#### Others consequences of categorical imperative

- Human beings are an ends in themselves.
- They can't be treated as a means or an instrument to achieve higher value for society or nation.
- His idea represents the modern concept of human rights.

#### Kantian philosophy and public service

- A government officer must follow the Kantian philosophy.
- Emotions and sentiments often misguide a person.
- He must follow the law as a moral duty without giving many thoughts to its consequences
- In government, you can be punished for doing an illegal or immoral act, even if it was done in the larger public interest

#### Criticism of Kantianism

- Men are not to be judged on the basis of principles alone, they are answerable to the consequence of the action as well.
- A lot of evil can be done in the name of moral principles.
- A lie may be good if it saves the life of someone.
- It is difficult to be moral, if others are not obeying the moral laws
- Moral laws can't be conceived in a platonic world and implemented in a society without bothering about the results

#### A counterview of Kantianism

- Morals are not absolute, they are a code of conduct developed for group survival.
- They vary with the nature and circumstances of the group.
- Every idea leads to its opposite, and then unites with it to form a higher or more complex whole.
- There is an underlying "identity of opposites".
- Every thesis follows an antithesis which later leads to synthesis of the two creating more complex thesis.
- The growth of an idea follow an evolution cycle like that of any living organism.

#### References

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wikipedia, immanule kant